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TRANSIENT NOTICES, FIFTY CENTS FOR EACH LINE, EACH INSERTION. FOR LARGER SPACE AND PERMANENT RATES, APPLY AS ABOVE.

We received, a short time since, the "pocket collection of scraps" which one of our friends, a commercial traveler, had kindly picked up for us on every shore. Several of these went at once into the printer's hands, and last week we discovered to our amusement that we had copied one of our own "Ballots" which had floated anonymously into the great sea of literature, and had been gathered in by our unconscious friend. In fact the frequency with which we discover our own work elsewhere leads us to wonder, whether the Eastern ready-set-up, and the Western papers generally, don't lean pretty heavily on originality where ever they catch on to it.

SUN SPOTS AND RED SUNSETS.

A very ingenious theory has been lately broached to account for the peculiar redness of the evening and morning skies. We have been told by various scientists that it was caused by gaseous exhalations from the volcanic disturbances in Java, that it was produced by "cosmic dust," which is a collection of fine particles of some thing nobody exactly understands, and finally, there have been suggestions that it was caused by the smaller than a comet. With the crude ideas of decomposed weather prophets we have nothing to do, and shall not regard them as of any more value than a vision of a "sun spot" is coming.

The phenomenon itself, however, is worthy of serious attention. That it has to do with the sun there can be little doubt, for if the sun's light did not exhibit it to us we should not see it at all. The effect of this light is therefore in some manner to develop the redness in the sky. And now comes Mr. K. C. Maine, of Rochester, N. Y., and deposes that he has compared the sun-spot period with the red light, and that there is a striking coincidence.

In brief, he says that since Nov. 24th, when the light first appeared, he has watched it and the spots together. Between Dec. 2nd and 6th there was quiet on the sun and paleness in the sky. On Dec. 8th a gradual increase of light accompanied the return of the sun-spots. By Dec. 21st a big—in fact an enormous—sun-spot area had come into view, and away flamed all the fireworks on the 24th and 25th, as if for Christmas itself. The spots decreased and disappeared by Jan. 1st, and on Jan. 2nd we had the old fashioned, ordinary, plain china for sunset, without any color to the tea cup at all. But on the 3d the new tea things were again announced by the electric bell—a magnetic storm attending a great solar effervescence—and, during the present week, we are quite ready for company whenever they call.

These agreements of the red light with the sun-spot activity cannot fail to attract general attention. We have long known that there was a connection between disturbances in the photosphere of the sun and similar phenomena as revealed by our telegraph and telephone lines on the earth. What this connection is, and how the Aurora Borealis and the Zodiacal Light are related to it, and what it has to do with Dr. S. Weir Mitchell's curious discovery about the co-incident neuralgic storms, of course we cannot tell. Lockyer and Proctor and other astronomers have confessed themselves baffled by it.

But that extraordinary weather has been joined to these displays no one can reasonably question. The meteorology of the red light period is as interesting and instructive as its possible elucidation of other obscure problems. Our facilities of inter-communication throughout the world of science are now so fine that we look hopefully for some degree of intelligent solution to these enigmas. We hear that a certain guild of Scripture students in England—and, perhaps, in America—are interpreting these matters as "signs." It involves no sacrifice of sound scientific method for us to admit that the prophetic books of the Bible recognize solar and atmospheric phenomena among the con-

ditions precedent to the accomplishment of their predictions.

Now we shall have room in THE CITIZEN for any succinct and thorough treatment of this subject, from the biblical standpoint, which may serve to enlighten our readers generally upon the present views which thus join the world of matter with the world of revelation. This should not be done in the way of controversy, or of narrowness, or of forcing pet conclusions. Give us the facts, and the coincidences, and leave the inference, if there be any, to the reader's candid judgment.

BRIBERY.

John Egan, an ex-Speaker of the Assembly of New Jersey, was indicted by the Grand Jury of Essex County upon a complaint that he approached Assemblyman Armitage of Essex during the last session of the Legislature, and told him that the Newark Plank Road Co. would give him, Armitage, any sum he might ask if action by the Legislature upon bills which Armitage had introduced hostile to the Plank Road Co. could be postponed.

To this indictment Egan has pleaded guilty, and he was before Judge McCarter on Tuesday last for sentence, which was postponed until Thursday of next week. There is no doubt that Egan was employed by the Plank Road Co. to use his influence to prevent or delay the passage of the Armitage Bills, and that he understood that he had authority to offer money or any other inducement to accomplish his purpose. These facts are not denied.

The question which now interests the people of this County and State is, what punishment will the courts inflict upon this crime of bribery? It is discretionary with the court to punish by fine or imprisonment or both. In a case like this, where the offender acts as the agent of a great corporation when the bribe is offered, it seems clear that justice demands that Egan be made to undergo imprisonment.

To impose a fine alone would be simply to permit the Plank Road Co. to pay it for him, and leave them and him free to attempt the same kind of tactics at Trenton during the present session of the Legislature. But if it is understood that the man who offers a bribe runs eminent risk of being sent to State Prison, it will become more difficult to hire a lobby of that kind.

The fact that Egan had been a former member of the House, and had knowledge of the methods pursued at Trenton, and that he was comparatively a respectable man, are all reasons which should induce the court to send him to jail.

What shall we say of the "unfortunate" gentleman of the Plank Road Co. who, on a day of reckoning, with his hands on his hips, looks on and sees the Plank Road Co. turn the Plank Road Co. of New Jersey into a poor protection from the wrath and indignation of the virtuous citizens of this State.

THE BUSINESS OUTLOOK.

We derive from *Bradstreet's* (that sober-minded and thoroughly informed journal) the materials for some very suggestive thoughts. In a leading article upon the "Business Failures in 1883," it supplies, in a condensed form, a complete commercial survey of the year.

It is instantly noticeable that the number of firms in business is *vastly* larger than ten years ago—there being 828,823 in 1883, as compared with 548,180 in 1873—a gain of 280,643. Where there is such an increase, the proportion of failures is likely to advance, and so we find it to have been. But the list of commercial deaths was actually less by 300 last year, than it was in 1878. And this in spite of the increase of business firms, in the years 1880 and 1881, to fully 60 per cent, of the entire advance of the ten years just noted. This is certainly no indication of deficient stability in the business basis of 1883, or of any "radical unsoundness in the present situation." And *Bradstreet's* takes this hopeful view, which the figures certainly justify.

Another significant point is the proportion of assets to liabilities, which in 1879 was 49 per cent., and in 1881, 47 per cent., and in 1882, 51 per cent. It rose in 1883 to 52 per cent. Or to put it in another form—for these are regarded as "available assets"—every firm which failed in 1883, could have paid 52 cents on the dollar; whereas, in 1881 it could have paid 47, and in 1882, 51. That is, the proportion of soundness has been on the increase instead of the decrease—another hopeful sign.

We have not space for any further notes except the single one of the *locality* of these failures. The total failures of the Eastern States last year were 1,507; of the Southern States 1,082; of the Middle States, 2,338; of the Western States, 3,282. There was also 901 in the Pacific States, and 299 in the Territories, making a grand total of 10,299, large and small. The suggestive feature of these figures is the preponderance of the Western States as against the Eastern, Southern and Middle. This shows, in a broad and general way, that the commercial methods are safer in our own parts of the country, which have presumably multiplied their number of business firms fully as fast as the West. They have also been strong enough to resist the downfall of Western enterprises. Hence they are to be regarded as standing upon ground which grows firmer, instead of crumbling beneath their feet. These figures, and this brief survey,

WARRANT us in repeating our remarks of last week, and in adding that the conservative strength of our commercial affairs is found just where it should be—in the East, among the capitalists. And the capitalists are neither shaken nor scared.

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